

Cabinets and legislatures are key players of institutional efforts to promote gender equality and diversity in public life. The laws and policies that create the legislative and regulatory framework for promoting gender equality and for preventing and responding to gender-based discrimination can be initiated, debated and adopted within the legislatures. These laws and policies help shape societal attitudes toward women's roles, capacities and responsibilities. Given this role, it is important that legislatures themselves serve the needs of women and men as well as manifest the values they seek to promote through legislative processes. However, gender equality in politics is not merely achieving an equal share of seats and positions. A co-ordinated, whole-of-government commitment is crucial, as well as clear and effective mechanisms for translating public policies, services and budgets into concrete benefits for men and women from diverse backgrounds.

In 2019, women's participation in the lower/single house of parliaments across OECD countries averaged at 30.1% and have ranged between over 45% in Finland, Mexico and Sweden to less than 15% in Hungary and Japan. There is an overall positive trend in women's participation in the lower/single house of parliaments in OECD countries marking with an average 3.8 p.p. increase between 2012 and 2019. During this period, Mexico, France and Italy have witnessed a steady and sharp increase (over 10 p.p.) in the number of women elected to the lower/single house of parliaments. In most of the cases, the results can be attributed to changes in the political landscape and initiatives that favoured gender equality. In France, for example, the current governing party's decision to nominate women for seats in "winnable districts" had a positive impact on the 2017 electoral results, with the highest proportion of women elected that any party ever reached. Ensuring continued balance in women's representation in political decision-making requires ongoing vigilance. Between 2015 and 2019, the Netherlands, Germany and Slovenia have undergone important setbacks in this regard (-6 p.p., -5.6 p.p., and -12.3 p.p. respectively).

On average across OECD countries, women held one-third of federal/central governments' ministerial positions in 2019. This marks an increase of over 6 p.p. since 2012. The gender composition of the cabinet can be a strong signal of a government's commitment to gender equality. An increasing number of OECD countries manifest such political will: Sweden, Canada and France have achieved gender parity in the Cabinet since 2015. Women held nearly 65% of ministerial posts in Spain in 2019, marking a sharp increase of almost 34 p.p. in comparison to 2015. Despite the overall positive trend, several countries have witnessed backslides. Between 2015 and 2019, women's participation in the cabinet posts in Finland, Lithuania and Slovenia have decreased by 25 p.p., 21 p.p. and 19 p.p., respectively.

### Methodology and definitions

Data for gender equality in parliament refer to the share of women in lower/single house of parliament obtained from the Inter-Parliamentary Union's PARLINE database. Legislative quotas are enshrined in the election law, political party law or other comparable law of a country. By definition, quotas based on election and political party laws oblige all political entities participating in elections to apply them equally. Data on quotas were obtained from the Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) Global Database of Quotas for Women.

Data on gender equality in ministerial positions in national government were obtained from the Inter-Parliamentary Union's "Women in Politics" database. Data represent women appointed ministers as of January 1 of each year of reference. Data show women as a share of total ministers, including Deputy Prime Ministers and Ministers. Prime Ministers/Heads of Government were also included when they held ministerial portfolios. Vice-Presidents and heads of governmental or public agencies have not been included.

### Further reading

OECD (2019), *Fast Forward to Gender Equality: Mainstreaming, Implementation and Leadership*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/g2g9faa5-en>

OECD (2018), *Gender Equality in Canada: Mainstreaming, Governance and Budgeting*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264301108-en>.

OECD (2016), *2015 OECD Recommendation of the Council on Gender Equality in Public Life*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264252820-en>.

### Figure notes

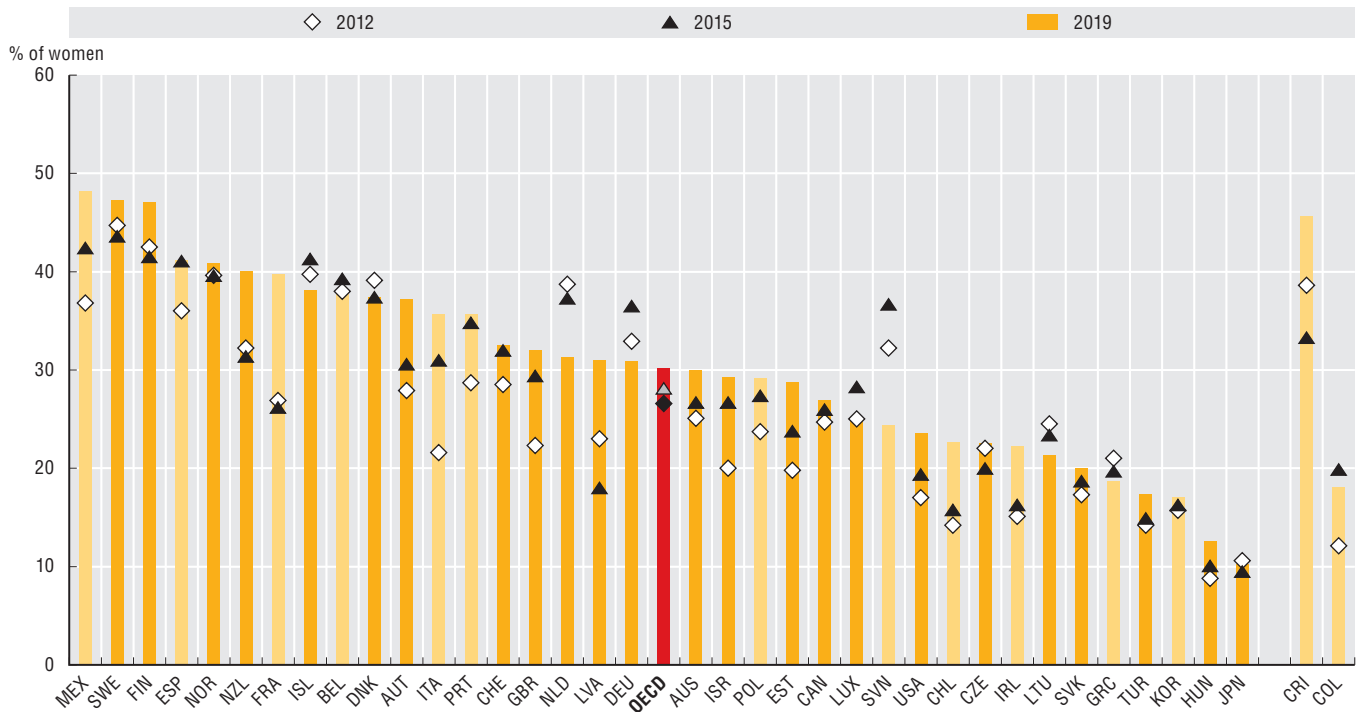
3.7. Bars in light orange represent countries with lower or single house of parliaments with legislated candidate quotas as of April 2019. Data refer to the share of women parliamentarians recorded as of 1 January 2019, 1 December 2015 and 31 October 2012. Percentages represent the number of women parliamentarians as a share of total filled seats.

3.8. Data represent women appointed ministers as of January 1 of each year of reference.

Information on data for Israel: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932315602>.

3.7. Gender equality in parliament and legislated gender quotas, 2012, 2015 and 2019

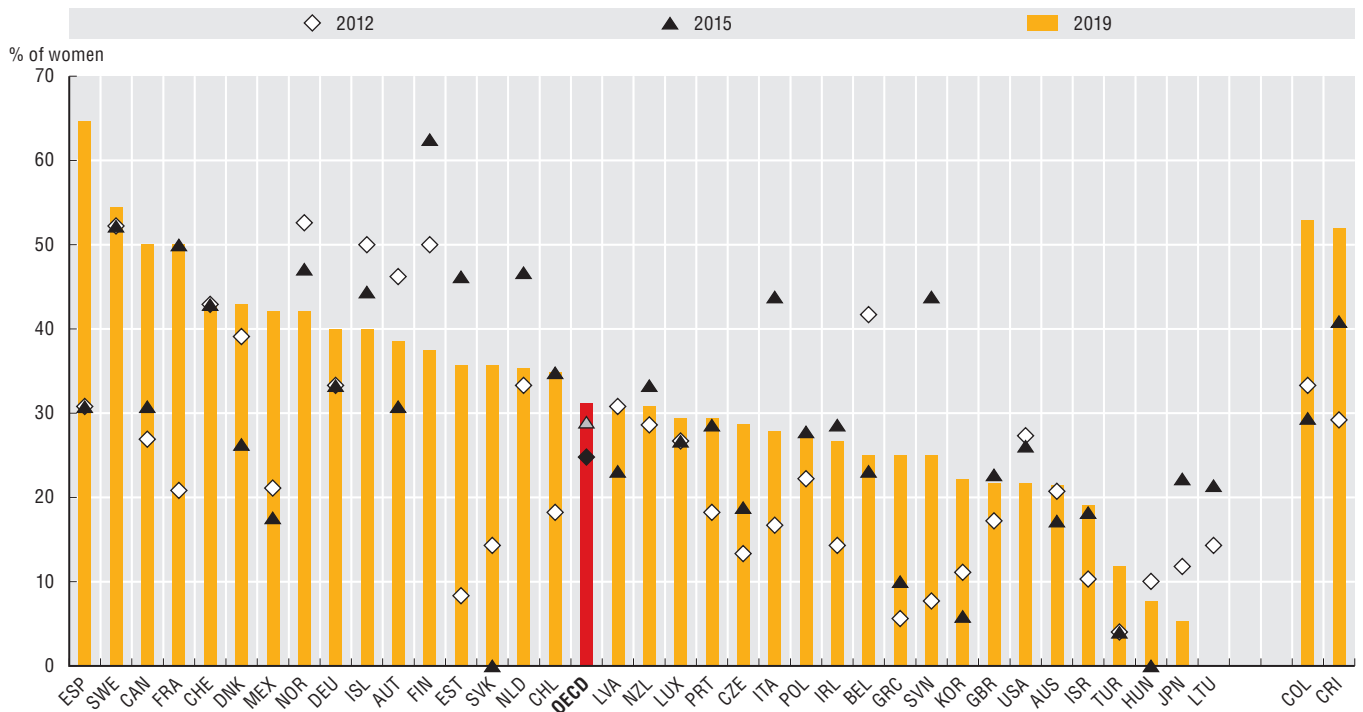
Lower or single house of Parliament



Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) PARLINE (database), and IDEA Quota Project (database). Data for Finland for 2019 were provided by national authorities.

StatLink <https://doi.org/10.1787/888934031199>

3.8. Gender equality in ministerial positions, 2012, 2015 and 2019



Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) "Women in Politics", 2019, 2015 and 2012.

StatLink <https://doi.org/10.1787/888934031218>



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